

CONCLUSIONS

This book delves into the fascinating depictions of children on Athenian choes, which classical archaeologists have long studied for insights into the lives of Athenian children. However, it was found that the depictions of children on these vases were closely tied to the use of choes - the shape of the vase played a crucial role in determining the meaning of the depiction. While the iconography of choes formed a cohesive whole from the late sixth to the fourth century BC, with various thematic strands interwoven, it was discovered that the depictions on choes were not a comprehensive view of children's lives.

Some choes depicted young Athenians, while others depicted slaves of the same age with the same attributes but in entirely different situations. The depictions of slave children on choes were much less numerous. Still, the two series flowed into one another, blurring the distinction between the two. A systematic analysis of the paintings revealed that they were not a direct reflection of social reality and could not be used to draw definitive conclusions about the lives of Athenian children. Furthermore, no evidence suggests that these vase paintings formed a coherent sign system.

The negative findings of this study are of profound significance as they allow us to view the depiction of children on choes as a legitimate historical source for the first time. The fact that choes were not adorned solely for the sake of the children raises compelling questions. Why were these scenes produced in such a large series? What was the subject of these depictions? Moreover, what was the subject of the depictions of women that appeared on Athenian vases simultaneously? These questions form the heart of this study, and the proposed answers are just one possible interpretation. However, one thing is certain. The changes in late Archaic and Classical Athens were not merely swapping the old hero for the new anti-heroes, men for women and children.

During the sixth century BC, Athenian painted vases predominantly featured depictions of warriors, athletes, and feasters. However, in the next century, there was a significant shift towards children celebrating a wine festival and portraying women at home, in wedding or funeral ceremonies. By the end of the fifth century BC, this trend had accelerated, with women and children becoming the central focus of Athenian painted vases. Nevertheless, the change was not in the subjects but in how life was depicted on Athenian vases.

Between 530 and 450 BC, vase painters drew inspiration from cultural and communicative memory, creating a wide range of representations of life. This innovation led to a significant increase in the thematic repertoire, which increased the production of painted vases. Vase painters continually surprised the public with new motifs and themes. However, this creative explosion carried with it a foreboding of the inevitable end. Between 450 and 370 BC, Athenian vase painters were confronted with a slow but steady decline in interest in their production. They started placing new subjects on vases, such as choes, linked to religious and social rituals, to reverse the trend. With this ingenious marketing ploy, Athenian vase painters secured a temporary market.

However, the lack of direct connection to Athenians' civic values may have contributed to these depictions' gradual loss of meaning, leading to a decline in customer demand. Painted vases began to lose their *raison d'être*, and by the end of the fourth century BC, the depiction of children and the production of painted vases had ended. After five centuries of successful and sometimes turbulent development, life-inspired representations on vases finally vanished from the Athenian cultural landscape.